DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 554 EA 016 113

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TITLE Teaming, Staffing, and Improving Instruction.
PUB DATE 14 Apr 83
NOTE 11p.; Based on an address before the Henry J. Otto Executive Development Seminar (25th, Austin, TX, April 14, 1983).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Change; Educational Improvement; *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; *Human Resources; Inservice Teacher Education; Leadership Training; Management Teams; Parent Participation; Principals; *School Administration; Sociocultural Patterns; *Staff Development; *Student Role; Superintendents; Teacher Supply and Demand; *Teamwork; Technological Advancement

ABSTRACT

Educational leaders' effective use of communications, collaboration, and common interests provides the key to managing a surplus of human resources. Students, like all members of an organization, are both a potential resource in fulfilling educational goals, and a personal and financial liability. Increases in the population, an aging citizenry, rising levels of education and of expectations, and the influences of advanced technology create pressures on school administrators, including intense competition for high quality teaching personnel. Declining educational quality will result unless initiatives are taken before 1985, such as utilizing students to fulfill staff responsibilities and cultivating leadership capabilities to enable teachers and administrators to better use available human resources. Strategies for realizing such initiatives include giving high priority to inservice training for all staff; organizing teams among and under professional staff that bring together students, paraprofessionals, parents, volunteers, teacher trainees, and other agency personnel; and building a leadership team of supervisory staff headed by the superintendent, thereby lessening the burden on the principal. (MJL)

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Teaming, Staffing, and Improving Instruction*

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The schools are full of people! That's hardly news! Everyone knows the business of education is people. What are the implications for administrators and supervisors in the fact that people are virtually all we have to work with. They are the resources, the problems, and the products of our schools and colleges. They are students, parents, taxpayers, administrators, businessmen, teachers, bus drivers, supervisors, cafeteria workers, custodians, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, bookkeepers, accountants, lawyers, computer programmers, secretaries, printers, school boards, etc.

None of this is news, of course, to any experienced school leaders, for they know well enough that our schools have more people than they can say Grace over. Oh, yes, there are declining enrollments with RIFs being required, but there are still loads of people all about and you can't run schools without every single one of them. Living and working with people is still the source of virtually every problem and opportunity administrators and supervisors face.

The Human Resource Dilemma

How many people does it take to keep one kid in school? Fifty or sixty personnel units per thousand students you might say. But no, it is more than that! For every 1,000 students, there are at least 1,500 to 2,000 parents and close relatives. Then, there are fifty to sixty professional personnel, and another twenty or thirty non-professional personnel, and of course, the 5 to 7 Board members. And let's not forget the 125 influential citizens (just a guess), and a host of police, nurses, physicians,

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* Based on an address before the 25th Henry J. Otto Executive Development Seminar, April 14, 1983, Villa Capri Hotel, Austin, Texas.

psychologists, scout leaders, little league coaches, etc. Even a judge or two. A total of over 3,000 persons must somehow be organized or at least considered if 1,000 students in your schools are to have a chance to learn. It's a 3 to 1 ratio. Three persons for each student!

Now, Harris, you say! Stop manipulating the figures! You counted the kids twice and exaggerated too. That's right, we must count students once as personnel -- instruments of the system -- and again as clients! Because they are both. A resource and a liability. And that's a major point! All persons related to an organization are both assets and liabilities -- resources to employ in getting things accomplished, but also potentially costly liabilities in both monetary and personal terms.

One might argue that the essence of leadership in humane organizations like schools is managing the over abundance of human resources. In times past, the leader's key was control through fear and superstition. In this day and age, the keys are communications, collaboration, and common interests. But administrators have such a small handful of staff members with whom to work, and they must delegate; and the school staff must be able to relate to people in very constructive ways, or the staff itself becomes part of the problem.

The Changing Society

What administrators of schools face is a dilemma in having too many human resources and too few staff members to manage that plague of abundance. But our society grows, changes, and exerts new pressures! The personnel picture is a constantly changing one. Past events become present and future problems. The die may already be cast in ways that require changes in organizing, deploying, and relating to people in many school settings.

If we concentrate on instructional personnel, four important events are continuing and emerging in American society:

(1) Growth - The population increases, not so rapidly, but it increases just the same.

(2) Aging - The population grows older and these elder increase in numbers and influence and stay around longer.

(3) Education levels and expectations both rise.

(4) Technology expands and permeates our lives.

Elaboration on each of these mega-trends (buzz word of futurists?) may be in order to help us understand the future we face in dealing with personnel.

Growth in population has become so constant and so world-wide that we sometimes worry about an era without it. In a capitalist economy, growth is almost synonymous with prosperity and profits. But in a public service economy growth is a mixed blessing and ultimately can have devastating effects on quality education.

Growth rates slow across the nation, but that is a deceiving phenomenon, for as rates of growth decline or level out, growth continues. The U.S. population is nearly 240 million. Double what it was a generation ago. Another 450,000 immigrants swell our nation's ranks each year. The elderly grow more numerous, and the adult work force has grown (perhaps to 100 million) to an all-time high and it promises to get even larger before later declines.

Growth in total population will continue in the U.S. until perhaps 2050 AD when the nation will be more than 300 million people. There were 3.6 million children born in the U.S. in 1981; the peak in births is expected in 1988 at 3.9 million. They'll be in our kindergartens almost tomorrow. By comparison, only 4.1 million children were born at the peak of the "baby boom." (1)

Aging continues for us all. We who are young find it hard to think about aging until later, after the fact. But aging is a continuous process in all

organisms. In this country, the elderly are a rapidly growing segment of the population. The work force of the early 1930's is almost completely retired now or deceased. The small adult work force of the 1940's and 1950's has felt the strain of educating their "babies" and supporting their parents in old age and illness. But, the "babies" of the 1950's and 1960's are now entering the work force in large numbers. This is the "baby boom" group, beginning to invade the labor market. Unemployment is high, and this adult work force, huge by all past comparisons, is confronting a depressed, internationalizing, automating economy. Unemployment rates among our young "products" (graduates or not) routinely run to 25% and higher.

The young teaching staff in our schools is a large part of that new adult group that is in over-supply. Administrative and supervisory staffs are generally older, even an aging group, and many are looking toward early retirement. And of course, the cheap teacher "labor" that our society has enjoyed and come to expect is getting steadily more costly every year with automatic salary increases and added fringe benefit costs.

Education levels and expectations keep rising. Perhaps you too have observed a tendency for people to hold in awe only those whose education level is substantially above their own. We now have a citizenry close to completion of high school on the average in the U.S. Our patrons are no longer reluctant to challenge the authority of the teacher or the principal. And this very mature well educated population tends to be very skeptical of its junior teachers who are in their early thirties.

These rising expectations of the schools threaten our conservative curriculum and teaching practices. Despite the clamour for basic skills, (and who could ask for less) our society really wants much more. It wants everyone to achieve at the 50th percentile or higher. It wants computer literacy, scientific inquiry, mathematical acqumen, and writing skills too. It wants these

things not only for "our" kids, but for all kids -- the retarded, the disturbed, the migrant, the bilingual; yes, even for the plain ordinary average and the athlete too.

What faith they have -- these citizens -- in the school system's capacity to educate! Adding fuel to the future fires of discontent, many now embrace Blooms' "mastery learning" as a practical reality rather than promise for future decades. Hence, expectations are inflated even more by the over-zealousness of practitioners and professors alike. The credibility gap widens to a chasm as an educated populous grows more demanding, more critical, society's real needs grow more complex, and naivete rules supreme in calling for back-to-basic imaginary times plus promises of mastery learning.

Technology is a painful topic! We hear, read, and see so much about the technological revolution. It obviously has reached unprecedented heights! Our nation, more than most is captivated by hardware! We wait anxiously before our television sets each day to learn what new gadgets some unkown corporate technician has created. We placidly accept the multi-billion dollar brainwashing campaigns -- paid for by tax credits -- that convince us a pay raise is essential to buy more of what we didn't know we needed last year.

But technology is here to stay! It has ramifications for curriculum development and teaching, of course. The pace of course revision has always lagged dangerously. A genuine system for continuous modernization of curriculum is urgently needed. Textbook adoptions are largely money wasting political exercises that have little relevence to what needs to be taught in many, perhaps most, classrooms. Current materials production centers, for example, need to be expanded where they exist and greatly proliferated in types ranging from school and classroom level production to district and regional production services. But this all calls for more not less staff and for technical specializations on the payroll beyond those now utilized or funded. Computer-based

curriculum analysis and revision is a technical reality but we seem much more excited about using our micro-computers to preserve and extend the use of shoddy workbook exercises for children.

Technology has many faces! One is its insatiable demand for well educated and trained people. Conversely, the technocratic society doesn't know what to do with those who don't fit each new wave of technology. A few years ago, the crying need was for key punch operators, now they are technologically unemployed. T.V. repairmen nearly went out of fashion with solid state circuitry, and computerized medical laboratory procedures may be about to dent the surging demand for medical lab technicians. Curiously enough, the demand for one or another kind of human services persists and expands -- nursing, teaching, child care, retail sales and fast food services are a few of the top projected job openings for the 1980's and beyond.

A special problem for educational administrators in finding and keeping high quality personnel is competition. In nursing and child care, our society is willing to settle for para-professionals. The uneducated and untrained are accepted without serious concern in many of our child care centers. Nursing aides and para-professional nurses are utilized extensively in medical facilities. In the public schools, however, we compete for a large share of the 10% of the labor force with a bachelor's or masters degree. And the growing technology has so many more lucrative, high status positions than we can offer in the schools. (Consider a labor force of 100 million, less than 10 million college graduates and the public schools alone employ over 25% of all of them.)

The human resource dilemma facing administrators in our public schools might be summarized as follows:

(1) We have a young teaching staff which will largely remain in place for the next 30 to 40 years, well into the 21st century.

(2) We have a middle-aged, aging administrative and supervisory force that will be retiring in large numbers in the 1980's.

(3) Both teaching and leadership personnel are ill prepared by training, experience and conservative disposition to respond well to the urgent persistent demands for improved education.

(4) The unstable political and economic climate of the times is conducive to retrenchment not change.

(5) We can neither replace nor increase our professional staff in sufficient numbers with enough high quality personnel to meet the challenges of improving education.

Hence...

(6) Growth in numbers, deteriorating facilities, rising expectations, and limited access to resources will all conspire to promote steadily declining educational quality in our public schools for the remaining years of this century.

And (7) Superintendents and principals will get more heat from their constituencies than ever before because of all this.

Unless (8) Dramatic new initiatives are taken by 1985!

Initiatives for Quality Education 1985-90

Complex problems of the serious and societally rooted kinds I have been citing are not to be easily confronted. But, the "ace in the hole" for administrators is people -- the human resource abundance -- discussed in my opening statements. Schools already have a staff, a community of parents, and other citizens who care more than educators think. Our schools have students by the thousands and more coming every year who can be productive staff personnel -- who beg to be made a part of the adult world of the school. (I wish I had time to document the hundreds of reports of students as useful, productive, citizens;

in school and community.*)

The need is to cultivate more leadership capability at deeper levels within the staff so they can make fuller use of the human resources already at hand. Schools can gradually open up to become real community centers, not just adult course offering centers. Teachers can be retrained to present less, guide more, coordinate more, to engage in team efforts more, to initiate more new opportunities, to reinforce good deeds more, to give kindly corrective feedback more, and avoid punitive destructiveness.

Supervisory staffs and principals need to form leadership teams, planning more, monitoring for the exciting, giving technical assistance, clearing roadblocks, communicating and evaluating for sound development. One of the dangerous trends of the moment is to turn to the lone principal with all the problems and needs and say to him or her, "You do it The importance of the principal in the leadership team is well established and being further clarified (Edmonds, 1981; Purkey and Smith, 1982, etc.). But, it is naive to deal with such complexities in simplistic ways.

Three major strategies for moving on such initiatives may be worthy of consideration:

Strategy #1 - Inservice training for all staff needs to become a top priority. That may mean a 200 day school year for which teachers will be paid. It means utilizing parent and citizen volunteers to give teachers time to study, confer, experiment, demonstrate, attend workshops and conferences, etc. It means financing at 5% of the total operating budget for training staff; travel, materials, consultants, etc., and gradually by 1990 increasing these expenditures as high as 10%. It means making staff growth and development everybody's business with the leadership team making it

* A single example is reported regarding Ball High School in Galveston, Texas.

their priority business. (Teachers and kids can run the schools with a little bit of help from the principal. The task of leadership is to make them better).

Strategy #2 - Organizing teams among and under the professional staff for every purpose using students, para-professionals, parents, volunteer citizens, college teacher trainees and other agency personnel too. This means giving priority to every staff member becoming a team leader. Every librarians' goal would be to see how little detail work he or she can do to make the library really hum. Every teacher would aspire to have a support team of parents, citizens, students, who can learn to do all but the most sensitive work of the classroom teacher.

Strategy #3 - Building a leadership team. A growing, developing, active program of team-building is essential in utilizing the abundant and varied resources at hand in every school. More and better leadership is required. Teachers (unions too) have put us on the defensives about too many administrators and supervisors. In fact, by all rational and experiential standards, our schools are under staffed! Supervisory staffs rarely reach the 3% level needed to promote instructional change. Assistant principals and department chairmen are largely wasted in non-leaderly endeavors. But even in schools with ample leadership, team building is a rarity! The superintendent all too often relies very heavily on the "lone" principal, presuming that essential competencies are there. In fact, they rarely are and cannot be expected to exist in any one individual.

Supervisors continue to be deployed in Lone Ranger fashion, each pursuing his or her specialty or "pet" in single minded, single handed fashion. Or, worse yet, they become hand-maidens for the principals trying to extinguish the many fires smoldering all about the building.

Team building with the superintendent as its lead-person can make a difference. AASA has often advocated the superintendency team concept, but making it a reality is largely still to be. The fact is, we really don't know how to organize and operate leadership teams. New concepts need testing. Radical departures need to be considered. Calling a meeting to discuss concerns will not create teamwork. Teams are small groups or highly task-oriented individuals with common interests and differentiated competencies who apply them both in planned and coordinated ways. Football and basketball teams make goals and baskets. Leadership teams can move the ball toward goals too! But the teams and their strategies have yet to be developed. Our dilemma in staffing is also, perhaps, our challenge for the 80's and 90's.

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(1) Growth statistics are based on U.S. Bureau of Census document, Current Population Reports, "Projections of the population of the U.S. 1982-2050 (Advance Report)." Series P-25, No. 992 (October 1982). U.S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington, D.C.